Paul Morrissey's *Flesh*:
Seeing through the Mirror of Warhol's America

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B.A. (Columbus State University) 2006
M.A. (University of California, Davis) 2010

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Art History

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

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2010

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the way Paul Morrissey's first independent film, *Flesh,* used the visual vocabulary of Andy Warhol to advocate for conservative social values and foreshadowed a shifting attitude of public values. Morrissey changed Warhol's filmmaking techniques from a self-reflexive avant-garde mode to a commercial approach. The film was released in 1968, the cataclysmic year of the counterculture rebellion. Making the film while Warhol was recovering from gunshot wounds, Morrissey was both attracted to and appalled by the social values of Warhol's factory. *Flesh* cast judgement on the countercultural youth using Warhol's documentary style as a way of addressing society. Although Morrissey included queer characters that defied heterosexual norms, they were not cast sympathetically. *Flesh* focused longingly on the physical body of the film's star, Joe Dallesandro while expressing disapproval at the commodification of his body. To suggest alternative ways that the male body might be perceived as a cultural icon, Morrissey used references to classical Greek art and culture as a point of comparison for the contemporary youth. But Morrissey was not using classicism in isolation; rather, the film drew on the existing underground muscle magazines and gay porn that also used classicism as a facade for acceptable forms of beauty. The provocative sexuality in the film, combined with Warhol's name and the narrative plot made *Flesh* a commercial success. That success influenced Warhol, who was

becoming dedicated to capitalizing on his artistic productions, to give Morrissey complete control of subsequent films. As the promise of countercultural change came to an end, Americans became increasingly interested in economic freedoms and returning to traditional values. Thus the film represents a pivotal moment in Warhol's career as well as America's changing cultural values. On the one hand, its success contributed to the new economic agenda of conservatism represented by Warhol's factory. On the other hand, Morrissey's concern with the decline of traditional moral values was deeply personal and yet anticipated the moral conflicts that would be brought to the forefront of American politics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were many people whose physical help or love and support made my completion of this thesis possible. I am most grateful to my thesis committee that spent countless hours reading drafts, making comments, and pushing me to consider the implications of my thoughts. A special thanks goes to Professor Blake Stimson, my thesis chair for his insights and assistance but most importantly his belief in this project from the beginning. My other readers, Dr. Christina Cogdell and Dr. Roller, were especially generous with their time and efforts in giving me feedback and coming down on the importance of every word I chose. Their enthusiasm in my topic and prompt draft revising kept me constantly working on making this paper what it is today.

As helpful in this progress has been my peers and friends, Laura Hutchison and Kristina Schlosser. Their kind words, receptive ears and willingness to edit has been of great importance to me. They have listened to my thoughts and ideas for this paper evolve over the past year and were always eager to help me talk out my ideas. I knew I was never alone in this process and kind words of encouragement were only a phone call away.

No acknowledgements would be complete without due thanks to my boyfriend Alan Bettes and my parents, Dan and Cindy Ross. Their love, support and words of encouragement were always appreciated. And finally I thank my two boys, Basel and Nero, who patiently sunbathed or chewed on bones while I fleshed out most of my paper.

Paul Morrissey's *Flesh*:

Seeing through the Mirror of Warhol's America

I'll be your mirror
Reflect what you are, in case you don't know
I'll be the wind, the rain and the sunset
The light on your door to show that you're home
When you think the night has seen your mind
That inside you're twisted and unkind
Let me stand to show that you are blind
Please put down your hands
'Cause I see you

I find it hard to believe you don't know
The beauty you are
But if you don't let me be your eyes
A hand to your darkness, so you won't be afraid
When you think the night has seen your mind
That inside you're twisted and unkind
Let me stand to show that you are blind
Please put down your hands
'Cause I see you
I'll be your mirror [1]

[1] Reed, Lou. Lyrics to *I'll be Your Mirror* from The Velvet Underground & Nico, 1967.

Lou Reed's lyrics to the Velvet Underground's song, *I'll be Your Mirror*, poetically expresses the optimistic perspective on love held by the 1960s counterculture. Reed's love song suggests that the reflection of his mirror uses the power of love to find the best in people and overlook their downfalls. The song was first recorded in 1967 for The Velvet Underground's self-titled album and was sung by Nico, a German composer, singer, fashion model and actress. The decision that she sung the lead vocals created the feminine, melodic voice that completes the love song.

Andy Warhol's mirror reflected something different. It recorded the people and objects surrounding his life while refusing to make comment on what he captured. Reed's lyrics could be referring to Warhol's non-objective style of filming and his ability to find beauty in everyday objects. Warhol's work offered a different mirror, making the world around him into his art. But it was Paul Morrissey, Warhol's business assistant, who claimed to "hold up mirrors" in the films he directed. He went on to explain, "I know I use a lot of license . . . but at the same time, I know I'm more realistic than anyone else. I hold up a little mirror and say, 'There it is, what are you going to do about it?'"[2] This combative tone in Morrissey's quote reflects his larger desire to realistically reflect the changes that were happening during the 1960s. Instead, his mirror reflected a darker side to countercultural change and served as a warning to the destructive products of the revolutionists. The objects reflected in Morrissey's mirror were very different from those cast in Warhol's mirror. As a result, Morrissey's films influenced a

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[2] Scott, Jay. "The Wacky, Irreverent Orbit of Paul Morrissey," *The Globe and Mail (Canada)* Nov. 11, 1988. GAM.

shift in the type of artwork that would come to define Andy Warhol. This paper will focus on the way Morrissey's first independent film, *Flesh* changed Warhol's filmmaking techniques from self-reflexive avant-garde mode to a commercial approach. Despite the inclusion of provocative characters, Morrissey's work cast judgement on Warhol's countercultural youth. This paper will attempt to prove that the commercial success of *Flesh* communicated Morrissey's conservative message through the visual language of Warhol that foreshadowed a shifting attitude of American values.

Morrissey reflected a more critical reality in his mirror from that of Warhol and Reed. Reed's reflection was that of a optimistic rock-star, projecting narcissism and believing in love's ability to overcome the "twisted and unkind." The song reassures the listener that she will be loved no matter what she does. In contrast, Warhol offered neither a love story nor criticism of what he captured. He used dead-pan film techniques as his mirror, refusing to add commentary to his films. Rejecting both Reed's optimistic vision and Morrissey's harsh critique, Warhol's mirror presented the subject as it was, allowing the viewers the freedom to place their own value, however high or low, on what they saw. Warhol's lack of direction often encouraged his subjects to extreme behavior for no other reason than the indulgence of it being captured on tape. Many of his comrades would later describe him as cruel, turning on and off his feelings like the switch on a

machine.[3] It was the lack of judgment and loose interpretation that Morrissey's mirror could not omit. Instead, Morrissey chose to reflect tough love through his critical portrayal of narrative films. This caring but strict attitude encouraged his subjects to analyze their actions. His mirror seemed out of sync with the romantic, narcissistic attitude of Lou Reed and Warhol's cool countercultural observations. Morrissey was not mesmerized like so many other artists by the changing attitude of the '60s.

Morrissey was an unknown figure before he met Warhol. Born in 1938 in New York City, Morrissey had a background in literature, having studied at the traditional Jesuit Fordham University. He grew up the eldest in a middle-class family and attended Catholic schools his entire life. This Catholic upbringing was the source for Morrissey's conservatism as well as his link to Warhol. Before joining the factory, Morrissey served a short term in the US army and attempted jobs in insurance and as a social worker. Always having an interest in film, he attempted to screen old movies in his New York City apartment before it was closed down by the police because he did not have a permit. He had begun making short experimental films before meeting Warhol in 1965.[4]

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[3] His lack of emotions often led to a self-destructive manner noticed in some of his closest friends including Edie Sedgwick. Although Sedgwick was never a stable person, her relationship with Warhol was at once so strong that they often dressed alike and posed for photographs together looking like brother and sister. When Sedgwick began a relationship with Bob Dylan it was Warhol who sadistically told her he had been secretly married. This disappointment and motorcycle accident led to a long period of hospitalization that ended in her death in 1971 at the age of 28 due to a drug overdose the coroner labeled as an 'accidental suicide.'

[4] The Official Homepage of Paul Morrissey "Paul Morrissey: Biography" http://www.paulmorrissey.org/main.html and Yacowar, Maurice. *The Films of Paul Morrissey.* (Cambridge Film classics. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Morrisey's *Flesh* was made at a critical juncture in Warhol's career when his body of work was making a transition in the late '60s. Warhol had begun his career as an illustrator, quickly making a name for himself with his shoe advertisements and a unique style. His personal work, which provided a stark contrast to his commercial efforts, would never make him accepted because he provocatively drew penises, feet and young boys embracing. (Figure 1) His first successful exhibit was of 32 Campbell's Soup cans in 1962. The exhibition shifted his context from controversial homoerotic images to icons from popular culture. Throughout the '60s he would continue to focus on objects from everyday life, simply presenting the images with little added commentary. But in the '70s his work shifted yet again as he increasingly focused on societal portraits that marked him as a commodity. At this point Warhol's art lost its personal vision as he became focused on its power to make him fame and money. *Flesh* would introduce him to the monetary power of commercial filmmaking. Although *Flesh* became a commercial success, Morrissey challenged the audience who saw the film to realize how foolish the counterculture looked from the periphery. His judgment of the counterculture was a warning call aimed at a broad audience.

In this respect, Morrissey dared to be a pessimist among the otherwise optimistic generation of America in the '60s. He advocated for a conservative attitude because he was ill at ease with the values of the counterculture. He considered himself a Victorian republican based on the Victorian moral code instituted in the 19th century when Queen Victoria ruled England. The mirror he

chose to hold up was a warning against the extreme change that began as a rebellion against social inequality but took on its own momentum hidden behind a façade of change. Conservatives like Morrissey regarded the counterculture as exploiters of youthful enthusiasm and anti-war spirit.

Morrissey's own religious and politically conservative attitude makes his role in the factory a curious contradiction. Although his films have been heralded for their underground success and provocative nature, Morrissey bitterly maintained his own self-righteous morals, claiming that his films were merely reflections of their time. Morrissey's role in the films and the direction he pushed them alludes to more than mere reflections and helps characterize the shifting attitude of the social values in America. His role in the factory symbolizes conservative thought seeping into what appeared on the outside as a liberal countercultural movement.

The timing of the film is as relevant as the execution. Unforeseeable events quickly reversed what began as a decade of major social shifts in American society. 1968 has been called

> *the* pivotal year in a period of nearly unprecedented change and upheaval–a year that witnessed the turning point of the Vietnam War . . . the shattering assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy; the near-breakdown of the Democratic National Convention – and, some thought, of the American political system itself.[5]

It was the year the promise of youthful rebellion fell flat. The American public's response shifted political power from the left to the right as the majority decided the Democratic domination of the decade had failed.

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[5] Kaiser, Charles. *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation.* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988) front flap.

Warhol too was making ideological changes as he restructured his factory and put it under new management, revealing its corporate core. Morrissey moved closer to the top of the factory's hierarchy, instituting his conservative attitude into Warhol's big business model. What Morrissey offered as a critic of the counterculture corresponded with the generalizations conservatives used to instigate fear about liberals' loose morals.[6] Morrissey's judgment in Warhol films foreshadowed the shifting moral attitude of Americans, rejecting countercultural change.

Morrissey began conceiving *Flesh* at a time when tension seemed to be bubbling up from every minority group, especially the gay community. *Flesh* is an especially timely film to consider within the contextual history of gay liberation. It was released the year before the 1969 Stonewall riots, considered the official start to the gay liberation movement.[7] During the 1960s, New York, in particular the West Village, became a mecca for the gay population. As police began to target homosexuals on the basis of sexuality and make humiliating arrests that

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[6] Brennan, Mary C. *Turning Right in the Sixties: the Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 118.
"Right-wingers . . . found the sexual revolution much harder to accept. "The Pill," used widely after the early 1960s, eliminating the fear of pregnancy, thus opening the door for freer sexual relations. The widespread use of drugs further encouraged the shedding of inhibitions and the development of alternative lifestyles. Desiring to "tune in, tune on, and drop out" young people challenge the basic values of most Americans, especially conservatives. Many people, shocked by scenes from Haight Ashbury and college campuses, began to reassess the traditionalist ideas of [Barry] Goldwater that they had found old-fashioned only a few years earlier."

[7] The Stonewall Riots began June 28, 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village. Homosexuals fought back to police brutality and a riot quickly broke out. Within weeks the Village community organized activists that were eager to establish public places where homosexuals could be open about their sexuality without fear of arrest. The riots are cited as the start of the gay liberation movement and the week is celebrated in many metropolitan cities around the United States as Gay Pride Week.

often cost these men and women their jobs, the gay community became filled with activists. Although *Flesh* is not an exclusively gay film, it appealed to gays because of the prominent nudity of the main male figure, Joe Dallesandro, as well as his swinging sexuality that challenged American notions of 'normal' sexuality.

Another major source of tension was the emerging protests on college campuses of the Vietnam War. In early 1968 a particular volatile protest occurred at Columbia University in New York, when students discovered the university's ties to the military industrial complex. These protests inaugurated the large-scale public distrust of the war and of the government which, many felt, had lied to the American people about its causes. These protests foreshadowed the declining popularity of the Democratic Party, evidenced at its disastrous convention in Chicago that summer, and paved the way for a new conservative majority.

Thus, in the year 1968, the youth of America had reached a pinnacle of frenzy, and amongst those enraged was factory groupie Valerie Solanas. She was angry with Warhol for not using her play, titled *Up Your Ass*, to create a film, so she shot him three times in the chest on June 3rd, 1968. The injuries put Warhol in the hospital for the remainder of the year. During this hiatus, Morrissey was able to take the reins and create *Flesh*, the first Warhol production to be made without Warhol behind the camera. Operating under the guise of *Andy Warhol Presents*, Morrissey wrote and directed the film *Flesh*, although it varied significantly in style from Warhol's films. The commercial success of Morrissey's

film was unmatched by any of Warhol's avant-garde films. The significance of the film lies in the shift from the self-reflective, avant-garde mode of Andy Warhol to the commercial approach of Paul Morrissey that audiences found more palatable due to its narrative structure. Undoing Warhol's observational documents, Morrissey constructed a plot and gave his actors and actresses script direction. Pushing Warhol's films further away from the exclusivity of the art world resulted in their explosion in mainstream cinema.

The success of *Flesh* also alerted Warhol to film's economic potential. *Flesh* grossed over two million dollars, and began a new era marked by the move of Warhol's factory. After a factory regular shot Warhol, he realized the factory needed to limit public access to its premises. This might be seen as a move towards the privatization of Warhol's art. The silver factory was packed up and moved to Union Square where it had a security camera installed to constantly document everything that occurred. It was no longer an open hangout for countercultural characters that wondered off the street. Morrissey had proven useful in keeping up the business side of Warhol's art and the success of *Flesh* proved his worth as an artistic partner. Morrissey's role increased when the factory moved uptown and implemented tighter security, turning its once public access private. At this point the factory had become a gated community.

The absence of Warhol from the shooting of *Flesh* directly correlates to the changed direction and approach of the film. With a cast of tragic characters that represented the troubled youth of the 1960s, Morrissey moved past the idealized glorification of the avant-garde in order to address the overwhelming

shift in the social constructs of the decade. The inclusion of a narrative opened the gates to a much broader audience who thought they were getting a glimpse into Warhol's factory. This change also allowed the film to act as a piece of social commentary. *Flesh* embodied everything that the avant-garde chose to disregard, returning to a prescribed Hollywood narrative that left many high art critics like Jonas Mekas greatly disappointed with its release. But Morrissey gave the audience a story that they could watch, digest and judge. The characterization of the actors and actresses in *Flesh* reveals Morrissey's underlying conservative attitude towards the youthful generation experimenting with countercultural change.

Although there is an extensive amount of literature written on Andy Warhol, far less recognition has been given to Paul Morrissey as the artist responsible for many of the Warhol films. With age, Morrissey has become more vocal about his role in the factory and lack of artistic acknowledgment in Warhol's films. Morrissey has been interviewed for countless magazine articles over the years due to his association with the popular icon that Warhol became, but has left only a trail of disjointed quotes that seem to come from someone out of sync with his generation. Recent scholarship seems to increasingly acknowledge Morrissey's endeavors, but discussion of his work remains limited to the context of the Warhol canon. Only one short book, by Maurice Yacowar (1993), has been devoted to Morrissey as an independent filmmaker. Far fewer critics have analyzed Morrissey's films, such as *Flesh*, beyond its mention within the canon of 1960s underground cinema.

This paper is the first that attempts an in-depth analysis of *Flesh* and Morrissey's role in changing the art of Warhol. Morrissey's conservatism, seen through his references to Classicism as a nostalgic attempt to return to the past, mirrors the shifting emphasis of morality bleeding back into the majority of American society. This change in aesthetic correlates to Warhol's changing aesthetic and his venture into art as an entertainment business.

Homosexuals & American Film

Part of Warhol's charm was his mysteriously invented character. Despite Warhol's devout religious beliefs, his sexual preference was for men. However, he was considered by many of his friends to be asexual. He rarely took part in sexual encounters with men, due perhaps to his own insecurities, but instead chose to watch or participate vicariously through others. Open homosexuality in the 1960s was still considered by most Americans morally wrong and could be extremely dangerous.

Morrissey's sexuality is much less explicit. He never married or had an extensive relationship with either a man or a woman. Perhaps his chastity relates to his social conservatism and religiosity. Many factors could easily lead one to assume that Morrissey's sexual preference would be men: films like *Flesh* read as product of his own sexual repression, but it is not my intention to explore this subject. Rather, we may consider him, like Warhol—asexual. His films, however, were created as a product of the closet, as the characters grapple with their sexuality and at some points deny homosexual activity. Because of the homoerotic scenes, which defy the American stigma of homosexuality, this film was very influential to the homosexual audience that sought it out. The general public also watched it because of its association with Warhol's name and fame.

For the most part, American cinema has excluded the voices of homosexuals; therefore *Flesh* is especially important due to its inclusion of queer voices. Although many scholars have pointed out the impact of several of the earliest Hollywood directors, writers and actors/actresses as homosexuals, their

sexual orientation was not associated with their success and was often hidden.[8] Following Hollywood's Production Code in 1930, enforced by the 'Seal of Approval' in 1934, explicit heterosexual affection was forbidden and even the suggestion of homosexuality deemed as "sex perversion" in film was strictly prohibited. Americans screened decades of clean, wholesome fantasy that offered no alternative to the 'normal' American Dream.[9]

Gays were negatively reintroduced to the American public in 1948 after their long silence and exclusion from culture. Dr. Alfred Kinsey shocked the public with his book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* that immediately became controversial due to the sensational and taboo subjects. His research suggested, "37 percent of [white, American] men surveyed had had homosexual sex . . . [and] that human sexuality was a fluid concept based upon social conditions and that the binary opposition homosexual-heterosexual should be replaced with a sliding scale."[10] His findings not only shocked but also scared the American public. Although the research addressed a group of people excluded from 'normal' conventions, they ultimately produced panic and led to social backlash against homosexuals. As America moved into the Cold War, mass fear over took reason and homosexuals were often conflated with communists, considered a threat to National Security and chased out of

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[8] For further reading, Mann, William J. *Behind the Screen: How Gays and Lesbians Shaped Hollywood 1910-1969* (New York: Viking, 2001).

[9] Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean Griffin, *Queer Cinema: the Film Reader* (New York: In focus--Routledge Film Readers, 2004), 302-3.

[10] Ibid, 309.

government jobs.[11] Homophobia continued to rule America, pushing homosexuals further into the closet.

It was not until 1961 the Production Code was amended "to allow for the depiction and discussion of homosexuality, as long as it was done with 'care, discretion, and restraint.'"[12] The initial re-emergence of homosexuals in films followed a backwards path that almost always led to the homosexual taking his or her own life as a consequence. Even when repression and deeper aspects of homosexuality were explored, most of the time the film ended with the death of the homosexual character.[13] The moral of these films maintained that homosexuality was a "tragic flaw linked to violence, crime, shame, and more often than not, suicide. At best these films call for pity and sympathy for people who could not help suffering from the 'illness' of homosexuality."[14]

Film really started to change in the late '60s, as minorities banded together and refused to continue to watch Hollywood movies based on 'normal' happy conventions that reflected on a single narrative of American life. More challenging depictions of homosexuals, as well as typically taboo subjects, were produced by the growing number of independent filmmakers in the '50s and '60s. Underground films started to open a door for pushing out raw subjects that questioned the role of Hollywood films. "With younger people turning away from

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[11] Ibid, 310.

[12] Ibid, 312.

[13] Examples of suicide and death to homosexual characters include, *The Children's Hour* (1962), *Advise and Consent* (1962), *Reflections of a Golden Eye* (1967), *The Sergeant* (1968), *The Fox* (1969), *The Detective* (1968)

[14] Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean Griffin, *Queer Cinema: the Film Reader* (New York: In focus--Routledge Film Readers, 2004), 312.

Hollywood in droves, and older audiences opting to stay home and watch television, the major studios faced a heavy recession toward the end of the 1960's."[15] Finally, younger filmmakers began to address the counterculture and were given the financial backing by big producers desperate to increase ticket sales. Both *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* were produced in 1967, the year before Morrissey produced *Flesh.* These films, now considered Hollywood classics, were among the first to address countercultural ideas from the viewpoint of young outsiders who challenged the status quo. Their initial success marks the willingness and reception by moviegoers to view a different type of film with a new, innovative point of view. The movies that followed had less of a need to validate 'normal' conventions and forever changed the canon of American film.

Although the subculture was finally being addressed on screen, the result moved away from the conventional Hollywood happy ending. Many of these films had an underlying pessimistic moral that offered the public no solution. Many times the main characters were shot as a consequence for their renegade disruption of society, like *Bonnie and Clyde,* or because they undertook bold searches for an unparallel America identity, like the two main characters in *Easy Rider* (1969).[16] Other films, like *The Graduate* and *Flesh*, ended unresolved as the main male characters are assumed to continue their confused, mediocre existence. It is important to note that although the counterculture was increasingly addressed in Hollywood and independent films, the underlying

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[15] Ibid, 189.

[16] Ibid, 187.

message maintained that what they had to offer was no better nor more glamorous than the status quo. This emphasis on countercultural failure helps to explain the 1968 presidential election ended the reign of liberal democrats who associated themselves with change.[17]

The presence of homosexuality in American cinema might have been negatively slanted in the '60s, but at least homosexuals started to make an appearance. The importance of *Flesh* lay in the inclusion of more than just the standard, heterosexual versus homosexual binary. The inclusion of 'queer' characters opened up the possibility beyond homo and hetero to include bisexual, cross-dressers, and transgender people.[18] For the most part these roles were confusing and the American public did not accept them. *Flesh* played a large role in confronting these often confusing marginal sexualities. Some of the most famous drag and transvestite characters got their start in cinema with Warhol and Morrissey including Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis, and Holly Woodland (the former two appear in *Flesh*). Morrissey's inclusion of the shifting sexual role coupled with Warhol's name gave the world one of the first filmic tastes of the range of sexuality initially explored in the Kinsey Report. Actor Udo Kier remarked on the success of *Trash* in Germany, "that, had the film been made in Germany, it wouldn't have been shown in mainstream venues at all. It

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[17] With the election of the conservative majority, the depictions of homosexuals in movies quickly reverted back to false, horrific depictions of gays as psychopathic killers that threaten society. This can be seen in *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Windows* (1980), *Cruising* (1980), *Deadly Blessing* (1981), and *The Fan* (1981).

[18] The term queer, meaning odd or unusual, was re-claimed in an attempt to empower and describe more than just homosexual and heterosexual people to also include bisexual, transgender, and intersex people. Now often described as an acronym—LGBT.

was Warhol's name, he said, that gave the film legitimacy and helped to classify it as 'art' (and therefore as acceptable provocation)."[19]

Flesh did not occur as an independent phenomenon, but rather was a conglomeration of multiple influences for Morrissey that span from classic Hollywood cinema to underground gay pornography. Although homosexuality was largely omitted from Hollywood cinema, it did find a way to exist as an underground movement. *Flesh's* main character Joe had a history with underground gay porn that predated the factory.

Distribution of gay pornography came out of a longer history and circulation of muscle magazines. By 1958, Bob Mizer, already known for his publication, *Athletic Model Guild*, began to film 16mm, silent, black and white shorts that were available for home viewing on projectors or hand held cranks.[20] Men's muscle magazines, appearing on the surface as heterosexual body building magazines, began a cult following even before the twentieth century. With a focus on physical fitness, these magazines displayed page after page of sexy, nude men in an ultra masculine persona. These magazines began with an attempt to re-masculinize American men. Their history began, when,

> In 1899, pulp magazine mogul Bernarr Macfadden, the author of *The Superb Virility of Manhood: The Causes and Simple Home Methods of Curing the Weakness of Men*, published the first bodybuilding magazine to appear in America, *Physical Culture*, a publication that spawned literally hundreds of imitators in the decades to come, from *Muscles a Go-Go* to *Manorama*. For nearly fifty years, Macfadden advocated the revitalization of our country's masculinity, which he documented in

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[19] Quoted from Audio commentary by Udo Kier on Paul Morrissey, *Andy Warhol Presents a Film by Paul Morrissey; Flesh for Frankenstein*, Criterion Collection. in, Hawkins, Joan. *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 186.

[20] Stevenson, Jack. "From the Bedroom to the Bijou: A Secret History of American Gay Sex Cinema". *Film Quarterly* 51.1, (1997): 26.

> photographs of naked athletes whose spectacular physiques he hoped would inspire the viewer to transform himself from an effete, potbellied slouch into a rippling, all-American he-man.[21]

Not surprisingly, these magazines constructed for straight men became popular with more than just body builders. Macfadden's fear of the declining masculinity of the American male as well as obvious homophobia, led a few gay men to start their own physique magazines as early as the 1940 and '50s. Greek themes were often used as a classical reference to nudity. At first, there was little to set these gay magazines apart from their legitimate bodybuilding counterparts, but by the 1950s traces of camp began to emerge in such audacious periodicals as *Grecian Guild Studio* and *Physique Pictorial.* [22] The use of Greek themes in underground gay magazines and films is similar to Morrissey's use of Greek models.

As the homosexual audience of closeted men grew in the early 1960s, their ruse began to break down and editors of gay physique magazines acknowledged publicly the homoerotic function of their photographs. They became increasingly transparent about the sexual orientation of themselves, their readers, and strangely their models who were "surly (and occasionally felonious) heterosexual auto mechanics, janitors, service station attendants, steel mill workers, paratroopers, plumbers, and farm boys."[23] This later trend reflected a

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[21] Harris, Daniel. *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture.* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 86.

[22] Ibid, 87.
Camp refers to an aesthetic sensibility given to something for its bad taste or ironic value. Often associated with effeminate, exaggerated, theatrical performances. Writer Susan Sontag published "Notes on Camp" in 1964.

[23] Ibid, 88.

larger phenomenon among gay men who adored the blue-collar working boy, often the antithesis of themselves. Perhaps not coincidentally, before Morrissey discovered him, Joe Dallesandro had been found by Bob Mizer, photographer for the *Athletic Model-Guild.* (Figure 2)

The story Joe recounts of his real experience posing for men's magazines is similar to the plot he plays out in *Flesh* retold by Joe's biographer Michael Ferguson:

> How do you make a little extra bread when you're a fugitive teenager on the loose in Los Angeles? You chat up the dirty old men at the bus station. You make calculated decisions on whether or not you can trust them or not, whether you can take them or not, whether you can knock them on their ass and run faster then them if you need to. In 1965, Joe showed remarkable street savvy, but he also got lucky. For the promise of a few bucks, he hooked up with a fella who knew of a photographer in town who would pay fifty bucks for a good-looking young guy to pose for him. No funny stuff. Just some nudie shots and maybe even a loop if he liked you. For nearly half a century, Bob Mizer photographed and filmed near-naked and completely naked men showing off their toned, glistening bodies on his property at 1834 W. 11th Street in Los Angeles.[24]

Just as Joe's character in *Flesh,* the real Joe had hustled his body just three years earlier, further suggesting the film is a fictional documentary. Joe's cult following grew after his Warhol-Morrissey career. Members could still purchase photographs of him from *Athletic Model-Guild* as well as a video short which would give them no reason to see the plot of *Flesh* as fictional.

Using a classical façade to project closeted homosexual activity has a deeper history in America than the films of Warhol and Morrissey. Gay historian Daniel Harris describes the experience of closeted homosexuals seeking out what was at the time soft-core homosexual pornography.

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[24] Ferguson, Michael. *Little Joe, Superstar: the Films of Joe Dallesandro* (Laguna Hills, California: Companion Press, 1998), 35.

> In these unventilated theaters, guilt-ridden homosexuals watched such unspeakably obscene things as naked teenagers skinny dipping in mountain lakes, bare-assed cowboys in G-strings and Stetsons tackling unsuspecting Indian braves, and pensive artists sketching nude athletes in the tasteful poses of classical discus throwers.[25]

Many of the soft-core scenes in *Athletic Model-Guild* are similar to plots from Warhol-Morrissey films, including a scene of an artist sketching Joe in classical poses.

Both Warhol and Morrissey would have been privy to soft-core films that were increasingly popular in Times Square. "By 1966, more than two dozen peepshows were installed in bookstores around the Times Square area, and by the mid-1970s there were more than a thousand." What began as a soft-core heterosexual trend spread and "almost overnight the bookstores began to stock explicit magazines and film loops."[26] Even during heterosexual films, homosexual men began to cruise around the booths, taking advantage of the privacy afforded by the curtains. Warhol was a personal advocate for these movie booths and admitted to going to them frequently. The plots and themes of these films may have provided an unconscious reference for both Warhol and Morrissey.

Morrissey's use of Greek models in *Flesh* was a common subject in underground pornographic films. *Greek Gods*, produced in 1954 by filmmaker Bob del Montegue used the classical setting to cover up his otherwise

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[25] Harris, Daniel. *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture.* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 111.

[26] Escoffier, Jeffrey. *Bigger than Life: the History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore.* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2009), 92.

homosexual sexploitation film.[27] The film gained the attention of Alfred Kinsey who picked up on the campy combination of classical iconography and mimicry of Hollywood renditions of biblical epics. The plot of the film revolved around "three bodybuilders spending a lazy afternoon together, comparing themselves to classical statues of Hercules, Narcissus, and Apollo."[28] Although it would be hard to tell if Morrissey saw this particular film or was aware of the negative reception that followed, the use of classical statues as a basis for homoerotic films and photographs is apparent in *Flesh* as well.

Despite Morrissey's judgmental tone and the effect of the film's success on Warhol's art, *Flesh* remains important in American film history. Breaking away from the standard subjects that dominated Hollywood cinema, *Flesh* confronted America with queer characters and challenged normative sexuality. The inclusion of these characters led to additional success of the film as it grew into a cult classic for homosexuals looking to identify with characters onscreen.

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[27] Stevenson, Jack. "From the Bedroom to the Bijou: A Secret History of American Gay Sex Cinema". *Film Quarterly* 51.1 (1997): 26.

[28] Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean Griffin, *Queer Cinema: the Film Reader* (New York: In focus--Routledge Film Readers, 2004), 41.

Flesh

The plot of the film takes place in one day. The film begins with a close-up of Joe sleeping, reminiscent of Warhol's 321-minute film *Sleep*.[29] But unlike Warhol's stationary camera and rolling film, *Flesh* develops a story. Joe's wife, Gerri, violently wakes him and demands that he do some work so that she can afford the $300 to get her new girlfriend an abortion. The film then follows Joe, a male hustler, throughout his day turning tricks that include male and female fellatio, nude modeling, and homoerotic companionship. Exterior scenes in which the viewer observes Joe standing around while men cruise the street break up intimate interior scenes that often show Joe nude. Slow dialogue develops several of the characters, making the audience feel as if they were eavesdropping on an array of pointless conversations. Scenes are often given choppy edits that speed up time and elongate conversations. Unlike Warhol's films focused on capturing whatever action took place in front of the camera, the scenes in *Flesh* work to create a narrative and character development that mimics Hollywood films. At one point Joe educates a group of younger boys, also on the streets hustling, allowing the audience a chance to fulfill their curiosity about Joe's morals and lifestyle. He attempts to explain his sexuality and rationalize his way of life. The audience gets an insider's peak into the life of Joe, a handsome, young, and yet tragic hustler.

The film comes full circle as the last scene is shot in the same bed that Joe awoke in. This time his wife has her girlfriend over. After a day of sexual

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[29] The Internet Movie Database. "Sleep, 1990-2010" http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0187513 (accessed April 5, 2010).

exploitation, Joe is excluded from their embrace. The girlfriend decides against her abortion and Joe returns to his slumber. The decision to keep the baby gives the film a resolution as well as reaffirms Morrissey's Catholic stance against abortion. Morrissey's development of *Flesh* mimics that of Hollywood cinema and ends with a conclusion that releases the audience from further contemplation. This conventional format made Morrissey films easier for the audience to follow and combined with Warhol's name led to their success.

The seemingly impromptu nature of the dialogue leads the audience to read the film as if it were a documentary. In fact, Morrissey carefully interjects a story based on reality into his own more explicit, imaginary narrative. According to an interview with Joe Dallesandro, he and Morrissey originally discussed a very different kind of film than the one they eventually shot. ""It was supposed to be a story about a boxer," recalls Joe. "You see, me and Paul would sit down and I would tell him stories about my life or the people I'd known on the street and he'd say, 'Oh yeah, we've got to make a movie about that.'"[30] The film reflects Morrissey's fascination with tales from the streets mixed with his own conservative views of unconventional life. Morrissey's vision for the film included more than a straight documentary or fictional scenes. He carefully wove together real stories from Joe's life with his own ideas about contemporary culture, as well as references to Greek classicism that offer a point of comparison.

The box office success of *Flesh* was unmatched by any previous Warhol film. "Morrissey had made a $10,000 film in five days which was to bring in two

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[30] Ferguson, Michael. *Little Joe, Superstar: the Films of Joe Dallesandro.* (Laguna Hills, California: Companion Press, 1998), 73.

million in revenue to Warhol Enterprises."[31] It was well received in the US, particularly due to a media event that closed down a screening of the film, which led to lots of free publicity and caused public interest to peak. When the film was scheduled for screening in New York, the police department was called in to halt its 'depiction of lewd conduct." Rumors surfaced that the film's distributor called the police, which paid off in an overall increase in generated ticket sales. *Flesh's* success was not limited to the United States. It was released as a commercial film in seven other countries and rated fourth at the box office in Germany when released in 1970.[32]

After the success of *Flesh*, Warhol was eager to return to filmmaking and in a final collaboration with Morrissey, Warhol released *Blue Movie* as the sequel to *Flesh.*[33] With Warhol in the director's chair for the last time, the film clung to its avant-garde roots and the movie was a flop. Perhaps feeling defeated, Warhol saw this as an opportunity to focus on a new business endeavor, *Interview* magazine. Although Warhol continued to fund films, he never stepped behind the camera again. Morrissey took this freedom and created a series of films entirely of his own, yet they will forever bear the stamp of Andy Warhol.

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[31] Middleton, Andrew. "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 132.

[32] Scott, Jay. "The wacky, Irreverent Orbit of Paul Morrissey" *The Globe and Mail (Canada)* Nov. 11, 1988. GAM.

[33] The title given to *Fuck* for distribution purposes and in reference to the accidental blue tint of the film.

Fascination with the Greeks

One aspect of Morrissey's individualism surfaces in his use of Greek culture as a point of comparison. This comparison operates on three levels in *Flesh*. In the most obvious way, Morrissey, like many generations of scholars in the West before him, was intrigued by the Greeks for their obsession with the nude male figure and mystified by their culture. In the same vein, it seems likely that Morrissey projected his own homoerotic and overt sexual desires under the disguise of classical standards. Secondly, by referencing figurative representational art of ancient Greece, Morrissey aligned himself with a traditional Western ideal of representational art instead of the abstraction of avant-garde. Lastly, the idealized view of the youthful Greek body served as a point of contention for the contemporary generation of the 1960s.

In many ways, the Greek symposium culture offered an excuse for the loose sexuality played out on-screen. The intellectual respectability of this historical culture could offset its bisexual and homosexual activity that often offends conservative audiences. This is best illustrated with *Flesh's* character David, played by Louis Walden, who proclaims, "We're not queer," while engaging in homoerotic behavior. Because the Greeks had no word for homosexuality as we know it, nor any concept of same sex actions being unusual or morally wrong, Morrissey could interject these sexual acts using the same unconscious attitude of the Greeks.[34] The symposium culture of Greece encouraged relationships between older men and young boys, known as

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[34] Parker, Holt. "The Myth of the Heterosexual: Anthropology and Sexuality for Classicists" *Arethusa* 34 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 313-362.

pederasty, as a way of introducing them to society. Quoting the Greeks may have offered some sort of legitimization for male nudity and elevated his plot by giving it historical relevance.

Morrissey's references to Greek art can also be read as an attempt to return art to more traditional aesthetic values, centering on an adoration of the human body and pure classical beauty. His references to Greek culture operate as an outlet for Morrissey to make a more sober statement about the changing aesthetics of art. This was a way for Morrissey to make art conscious of its art historical past, adding in themes from the contemporary realm.

The poses of canonical Greek statues are both referenced and mimicked throughout the movie, serving as an ideal model for representational art and life itself. The statues also serve as a serious point of comparison and an excuse for the almost obsessive male nudity. The characters Joe and Geri (Joe's wife) can be compared to ancient Greek Kouros (male) and Kore (female) statues (Figure 3 & 4). Like the Greek representations, Joe spends most of the film entirely nude, forcing the viewer to become aware of his musculature and proportionally good looks (Figure 5). On the contrary, the women of the film are almost always fully clothed. Two especially apparent examples of this occur at the beginning and ending scenes of the film, with Joe and his wife in bed together. As the two engage in foreplay, the wife is completely clothed, even wearing her shoes, as Joe lounges in all his nakedness beside her (Figure 6). Even with the presence of a second female (the wife's girlfriend) (Figure 7), in the final scene Joe remains naked even though the two female lovers are cuddling.

The similarities to the ancient statues do not end with clothing. Both Joe and his wife have dirty blond hair that is slightly reddish gold, similar to the color painted on early statues. The Greek gods were thought to have this coloring. It can be assumed that Morrissey had these ancient statues in mind when portraying Joe and his wife. The deliberate decision to depict male nudity and not female would further associate Morrissey's film with classical art and Greek societal values.

Perhaps Joe's nudity classifies him in some way, as if his nudity were his costume. The contrast with the clothed female further distinguishes him as a character based on gender. Ancient Art historian Larissa Bonfante explores the ancient Greek use "of athletic male nudity as something that sets them apart from the barbarians, as well as from their own past."[35] She goes on to explain that the absence of clothing could serve as a marker, just as matching shirts help one distinguish two soccer teams. Joe's nudity, in *Flesh*, may be related to Greek athletic nudity and mark him as a separate and identifiable character.

In Warhol and Morrissey's previous movie, *Lonesome Cowboys,* nude male characters were cast along with clothed females. Film historian Jefferey Escoffier points out the Wild West setting portrays "relations between men in nature—that is, out in the open, without any clothes on. . . as tender and free. Machismo is merely a front, something you put on like your clothes. Nudity is

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[35] Bonfante, Larissa. "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93 (1989) 543-570.

freedom and joy. Nakedness is almost utopian."[36] Morrissey uses nudity in *Flesh* to distinguish Joe from the other characters as well as define his character the same way a costume might. His nudity defines his character as a young immature object of desire. Perhaps Joe's nudity classifies him as a member of the counterculture, rejecting the shame nudity previously represented. By redefining nudity as a costume, Morrissey appropriates its meaning just as Greek sculptors used nudity to define young warriors. Perhaps Escoffier's assessment of nudity as freedom could be applied to earlier Warhol-Morrissey films like *Lonesome Cowboys*. However, the moral which Morrissey put in *Flesh* shows that such freedom leads nowhere.

In addition to the physical representations of the Kouros and Kore, Morrissey also takes interest in the gender roles of Greek society. None of the women in the film are seen outside of the household. The streets belong to Joe, as well as the other male hustlers he meets. There is a clear divide between the private quarters and the public sector where the men conduct the business of the day, and the women stay home to keep house. Men control the outside world of the film just as they controlled the agora of Athens. This patriarchal divide of gender roles in ancient Greece is similar to that desired by Morrissey's traditional values.

The next correlation can be made between a scene of Joe and his baby and a Greek statue by Praxiteles, depicting *Hermes bearing the infant Dionysus* (Figure 8). One of the movie's promotional posters illustrates this comparison

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[36] Escoffier, Jeffrey. *Bigger than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore.* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2009), 34.

perhaps even more than the scene, featuring the nude Joe and his baby on his right knee as a visual summary for the movie (Figure 9). In the scene, Joe lies nude on the floor with his baby, who is eating crumbs from a muffin directly off the carpet. Just like the Praxiteles sculpture, there is tenderness between the two. The Greek statue expresses soft tender emotions between the God Hermes who is playfully dangling grapes to the infant Dionysus whom he holds. Both the Greek statue and the scene in *Flesh* display an unusual moment of tenderness between adult and child.

Morrissey's choice to use the baby is another deliberate blurring of reality and the fictional film. This scene early in the film sets Joe up as a compassionate character despite the seedy activities he is involved with in the scenes to come. The baby in the movie was the same age as Joe's son in real life, and this moment of affection reflects a real bond between father and son. Although Joe's wife forbade the use of their son in the film, the moment is based on a real experience Joe told Morrissey about bonding with his son.[37] The scene has no dialogue yet poetically re-creates the real tender moment.

We can be sure that Morrissey had the *Hermes and Dionysus* sculpture in mind while filming *Flesh.* This connection comes out a few scenes later when an elderly male artist (played by Maurice Braddell) cites the statue within his explanation of the history of art. He defines it as a significant sculpture from the classical era whose sculptural work evokes sympathy to describe moments of tenderness. It was the sympathetic emotion that Morrissey wished to strike in his

[37] Joe's wife would not let his son appear in the film so a female baby the same age was substituted further blurring the line between reality and fiction.

viewers during this scene. Morrissey's social critique can be inferred through empathy the film encourages for Joe and his child as they lie on the floor together sharing a muffin. Interestingly, the scene with Joe and the baby has no dialogue and the audience is left to create meaning from the montage of edits. This sequence of frames is reminiscent of Warhol's self-reflexive style. Morrissey focuses on the baby's hands, exposing the grit underneath her fingernail (Figure 10), and then shortly after focuses in on Joe's tattoo, "Little Joe" (Figure 11). This observational critique made by Morrissey can be applied to reality and stand for a silent judgment of the declining morals he associates with the sexual revolution. The words "Little Joe" offer a glimpse into the life of an eighteen year-old barely capable of caring for a child when he is only a child himself.

Another ancient custom that appears in *Flesh* is pederasty, the Greek same-sex mentoring relationship between an older man and a younger boy, also translated as 'boy love.'[38] In the film, two scenes portray older men who seek the company of Joe's teenage body, and in return offer their guidance and wisdom. Similarly, in Greek times, older men would take on younger lovers in an effort to introduce them to the political and social networks of their community. This relationship is described in *Plato's Symposium* as a superior love over heterosexual relationships whose function is to procreate. Male love surpasses this because it related to educating society. Socrates explains, in *Plato's Symposium,* that the older man "will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he

[38] Percy, William A. *Pederasty and pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that beauty of them all."[39]

One such scene that relates most directly to this Greek relationship occurs when Maurice Braddell's character, an elderly artist, approaches Joe as he stands against a classical stone building and columns. Joe piques the interest of the artist and is invited back to his house for a nude modeling session. Braddell turns out to have exceptional knowledge of Greek statuary and of Greek athletes, and offers Joe tips on how to properly tone specific muscles. The dynamic between Braddell and Joe quickly evolves into a teacher-pupil setting. Braddell wants to inform Joe of the Greek and Renaissance sculptural tradition so that he can take pride in his nude modeling. Braddell takes on a paternal role, educating and feeding Joe, although his repressed sexuality and adoration for Joe's young body lie at the forefront of his interaction.

During the drawing session, Braddell asks Joe to pose like the *Discobolus* (Figure 12 & 13), throwing an imaginary disc, as well as other Greek athletic poses. As Joe imitates Greek statues, his body is presented in ideal perfection and is used by Morrissey to advocate a return to representation in art. Braddell's character borders on the innocent version of pederasty and that of an overly sexually charged satyr, the derivative for *old goat*, as he hobbles around Joe with his cane, poking at certain muscles. Braddell's words and thoughts have no resonance with Joe, as his apathetic demeanor concentrates solely on time and money. Joe's indifference to the historical past reinforces the concerns and

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[39] Plato, *Symposium* 209 c-d. trans., Jowett, Benjamin (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1948, 1956).

complaints that Morrissey has with the contemporary society of the 1960s. Joe represents a motionless figure in a time of political and social upheaval, with no regard or appreciation for the past and no conception of the future.

This motionlessness can also be applied to Morrissey's view of modern art. Upon Joe's entrance into the apartment, Braddell asks if he likes the art on display. Joe seems indifferent. Interestingly, the apartment in which this particular scene takes place was actually owned by David Bourdon. Bourdon was a friend of Warhol's, and was an art critic associated with the early minimalist movement, one type of conceptual art Morrissey disliked. [40] Minimalist art has little obvious social or political relevance and Joe cannot make a connection with it. Instead minimalism represented a weak symbol of knowledge and money understood by only a small educated elite. Perhaps Morrissey is advocating for his own hybrid of artistic styles that returns to the ideal beauty of classical art but is relevant to the socio-political climate of his own times.

To further illustrate the apathy of Joe and the dynamics of pederasty, Morrissey puts Joe in the hands of David, played by Louis Waldon. Once again, Joe finds himself under the wing of an older man. David reads to Joe, gently placing his hand on his shoulder, and even takes care to pop a pimple on his cheek. Like Braddell, David wants to talk with Joe and considers their time together as a lesson. Acting as an *erastes*, or older male, David reassures himself that his presence "enlightens him [Joe]..." and asks, "do you find that

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[40] Cotter, Holland. "David Bourdon, 63, Art Critic with Expertise in Modern Generas" *New York Times*, April 3, 1998. Final edit, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/03/arts/david-bourdon-63-art-critic-with-expertise-in-modern-genres.html.

wherever you go?" Joe makes a poor attempt to pacify him but immediately changes the subject, asking for money. Joe is not interested in enlightenment but rather in satisfying his own immediate needs.

David is a proud Korean War veteran, who displays the scar from a flamethrower as evidence. David makes it a point to stay physically fit, extending his soldierly image despite his injury and begins to scrutinize Joe when he comments that he has not seen him at the gym lately. David comments on Joe's initial popularity at the gym, further linking the film back to Greek practices and male bonding that revolved around athletic training. The importance of physical fitness for the Greeks lay in keeping their warriors in peak physical condition for battle. Between the lines, we begin to see the generational gap, with David as a proud, selfless war veteran from the previous generation, dedicated to health and body, and Joe who is without purpose beyond the means of money. Morrissey and his audience would have been painfully aware of the contrast in social attitudes towards Vietnam. Perhaps to Morrissey, Joe's youth embodies the generation of Vietnam soldiers whom some blamed for a lack of application leading to defeat. In this sense Joe is the anti-hero. Morrissey compares the young generation of men to the cultured and enthusiastic solider that characterized the Korean War. Joe and his generation do not live up to the romantic image of the Greek solider, strong and proud, and they compare poorly to the generation before them that won the fight against communism in Korea. For Morrissey, Joe's preoccupations with his shallow ideas of the present keep him and America from winning in the long run.

Another scene in the film compares the idealized view of the Greeks to Joe in reference to sexuality and loss of control. A flirty struggle between Joe and his wife, Geri, ends with his penis wrapped up in a ribbon (Figure 14). Although one could glean multiple meanings from this (the most obvious being his sexuality as a gift), there might be a direct connection to a Greek custom of infibulation or binding genitals in an effort to illustrate greater control over one's body. (Figures 15 & 16) Art Historian Paul Zanker explains infibulation as "a sign of modesty and decency . . . [I]n the ideology of *kalokagathia* [physical and moral beauty], aesthetic appearance becomes an expression of moral worth."[41] The Greeks felt strongly that a longer prepuce was aesthetically superior, so they took precautions to avoid the exposure of their glands.[42] "Vase paintings and statues frequently portray nude athletes wearing the *kynodesme* . . . a thin leather throng wound around the *akroposthion* that pulled the penis upward and was tied in a bow, tied around the waist, or secured by some other means."[43] This form of controlling even the most vulnerable part of their body signified their cultural superiority. Morrissey extends this symbol to Joe. Unlike the idealization Morrissey places on the Greek warriors, Joe has no control over his own flesh, which is bought and sold. Joe's lack of sexual control illustrates a larger lack of control that can be extended to his generation.

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[41] Zanker, Paul. *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity,* ed. Alan Shapiro (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 29.

[42] Prepuce, also known as the foreskin, refers to the fold of skin that covers the head of the penis.

[43] Hodges, Frederick. "The Ideal Prepuce in Ancient Greece and Rome: Male Genital Aesthetics and their relation to Lipodermos, Circumcision, Foreskin Restoration and Kynodesme" *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 2001, 75:381.

For Morrissey, the repetitive comparison to the past helps accentuate the idealized sense of the cultured, civilized Greeks in opposition to what America knew of itself in the 1960s. While Joe visits his ex-girlfriend Geri Miller, playing Terry, and her two transvestite friends, Candy Darling and Jackie Curtis, dialogue once again reverts to the Greeks. This is the only scene in the film that depicts frontal female nudity. Geri Miller is exposed as she complains about her small breasts. She wants large, silicone breasts, but Candy reminds her of the Greeks whom she describes as follows: "all those beautiful statues, they don't have big tits like a cow, they're all willowy."[44] Classical beauty is contrasted with the contemporary *sense of* beauty as Geri showcases a head of fake hair and eyelashes with loads of make-up. When Jackie asks Geri to "develop her brain instead of her bust," she replies, "My brain can't be developed any more than it is and I think I'm cute. I don't want to change. If I learn too much I won't always be happy, [be]cause the more you learn, I think the more depressed you are."[45] Geri's character seems to be the epitome of what Morrissey despises. She stands for a generation that rejects knowledge and wants to live out their lives selfishly with instant pleasures—sex and drugs—with no regard for their community or the world at large. Joe is her counterpart, arguing for her breast augmentation on the basis that he is tired of the old ones even though he plays with them aimlessly throughout the scene. The scene ends with Geri and Jackie arguing over the plant in the room. Geri insists that the plant is real but Jackie

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[44] Paul Morrissey, *Flesh,* 1968.

[45] Ibid.

calmly states, "Lots of things feel real that aren't real." We can take her comment as a general statement for the false hope and revolution that Morrissey uses to characterize the liberal generation.

The two transvestites, Jackie and Candy, surprisingly act as the rational characters in the scene. They criticize the self-consumed youth in popular culture and offer the most profound comments. Morrissey explains his philosophy,

> I am the first to use transvestites that didn't play transvestites, and no one has done it since. I think the artifice of using a man as a woman makes it more of a movie. And movies are great because they create artificial situations, and only through artificial situations does the real truth sneak out.[46]

As Jackie and Candy flip through fashion magazines, they comment on the ultra-thin stars and fashion advice in contrast to their mention of ads for war bonds. This is the second reminder within the film that America is in the midst of a controversial war in Vietnam. By juxtaposing war bonds with consumer magazines and false beauty, Morrissey portrays the young generation as negligent and ignorant of current events. By using the Greek references in the plot on multiple levels, Morrissey is able to disguise his motives and make a case for looking back at a romanticized view of history. But the film demonstrates that Morrissey has his own fascination with the protagonist of *Flesh.*

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[46] Bahr, David. "Conservative Bard of the Demimonde" *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2000, Sec. 2, Column 1, pg. 21.

Morrissey's Alter Ego

From the moment that Joe stepped into Warhol's factory, Morrissey had his muse. More than any other person, Joe Dallesandro's youthful innocence embodies the immaturity of the young generation of the 1960s to Morrissey. Morrissey was both fascinated with and disgusted by Joe's lifestyle. Joe also represents everything Morrissey is not and comes to function as his alter ego. This is perhaps best captured in a triptych photograph taken by Richard Avedon in 1969, of some of the factory characters just a year after *Flesh* was filmed (Figure 17 and Detail). In the left panel Joe stands in the foreground, proudly displaying his nude body. Morrissey lurks behind him dressed in all black as if he were his shadow. The relationship between the two in this off-screen shot is similar to the *pederasty* relationship Joe finds himself in on-screen. Morrissey's gentle guiding hand rests on Joe's shoulder. Morrissey's gesture makes Joe an extension of himself, literally his "right hand man." The physical connection between them perhaps legitimized Morrissey's importance or somehow allowed him to embody the nude star he takes credit for discovering. Candy Darling on the far right of the left panel balances the two out. Her face is fully made up and her long wig covers the area of her breasts. Like Joe, she stands nude in a heap of clothes, yet her body is startling as she displays her penis on the otherwise feminine body. She makes an appropriate counterweight, bearing her bodily contradiction as Morrissey cowers behind Joe like his puppet-master.

Both Morrissey and Dallessandro reappear in the right panel of the triptych. This time Joe is dressed in all black and stands casually just behind

Warhol, also dressed in black. Both Warhol and Joe represents fashionable, sexy characters. Morrissey, however, is barely visible, with only his head peaking out in profile from Viva's shoulder. He is the only figure not facing the camera or carefully posed. Both times that Avedon captures Morrissey, he seems to find himself in the background, somehow lurking or preying on the youth and beauty of others.

Morrissey's film makes his adoration of Joe Dallesandro obvious and force the viewer to constantly confront his objectified body in a way that has been historically directed towards women. Contrarily, he almost always depicts female characters as weak, needy, and obnoxious. Morrissey's persistent fascination with bisexual relationships within his films is a main point of self-contention. One is naturally led to wonder why his films were overtly sexual and perhaps function as an outlet for his own repressed sexuality. His attitude towards sexuality seems conflicted, considering the dominant role it played in the films as well as its absence of meaning and feeling. However negatively he casts his characters, he himself was deeply intertwined with the counterculture.

Morrissey places the audience of his films as voyeur, and one cannot help but to become infatuated with Joe. It can be assumed that Morrissey, positioned behind the camera, also desires the flesh of Joe. Morrissey's obsession with Joe may be sexual or just reflect his desire to embody him. Morrissey discovered Joe and cast him as the main male character in almost all of the films he directed. Joe recounts his first visit to the factory: "When I went to work there," says Joe, "I showed up thinking I was going to be a bodyguard. I could be a little

hot-tempered and I could do damage, because I'm dangerous for a little guy.'"[47] It was that day that Warhol had been shot and, as Joe arrived, he was carried out on a stretcher. Joe assumed he was a day too late to start his job, but Morrissey had a different role in mind for Joe. Soon after they would start filming *Flesh*.

In Michael Ferguson's *Little Joe, Superstar*, the interviews with Joe shed light on the deep relationship between himself and Morrissey. Joe refers to Morrissey as his "mentor" and credits him with controlling his temper and substance abuse. Reading into Joe's history might tell more about the significant role Morrissey played in Joe's life. A product of foster care, Joe did not grow up in a stable, loving environment, instead he was raised on the streets and admits he was more of an adult at age 16 than he was under Morrissey's control at the factory at 18. Morrissey adopted a paternal role in Joe's life. At one point Morrissey and Joe were roommates while doing construction at Morrissey's brownstone apartment. Working together side-by-side, Morrissey used this time to mold Joe into a better citizen.

Joe was kept in check and Paul Morrissey had his hands full. Joe revealed their relationship this way: "Paul in those days would say, 'Joe you're an alcoholic,' and back then I didn't know . . . I didn't understand what the fuck he was talking about. 'You can't drink,' he'd tell me, 'because when you drink you lose control.' So whenever I went out, was seen in public, I wasn't allowed to drink. And whatever Paul told me, I did.'"[48]

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[47] Ferguson, Michael. *Little Joe, Superstar: the Films of Joe Dallesandro* (Laguna Hills, Calif: Companion Press, 1998), 22.

[48] Ibid, 23.

Joe's companionship with Morrissey came across as comfortability with the camera and his willingness to perform any role from Morrissey's imagination. And in turn, Morrissey created his loyal subject. Basing many of the plots for his film loosely on stories Joe told him, Morrissey was fascinated by the crude street life from which Joe had come. Joe provided source material for the life Morrissey was trying to save him from as well as expose in his films. Morrissey played an important role in helping Joe stay off the streets by financially supporting Joe with a job, providing the brownstone apartment to him and his young pregnant wife as well as regulating Joe's substance abuse. Once again, Morrissey was playing the role of the Greek mentor to Joe.

Independent Paul Morrissey

Because of his connections to Warhol, Morrissey's films were received more like documentaries than scripted commercial movies. The seemingly pointless dialogue that comes from the actors' and actresses' lines imitates the effect of Warhol's dead-pan filming technique. This strategy allowed Morrissey a context in which to lead his subculture characters into a trap, stereotyping, demoralizing and criticizing them. His movies and characters were so realistic that many people mistook them as real. The audience was often confused and "fans wrote letters offering to help him [Joe] out, naturally assuming that the young man named Joe who played young men named Joe in all his movies—movies that were improvised, no less—had to really be the person they saw up there on the screen."[49] The natural grunginess and lack of formal training of his off-the-street actors made their onscreen characters believable. As historian Andrew Middleton points out, "Morrissey's ability to believe his actors, and treat their dialogue with utmost respect, is the reason he is able to make the subjective documentary form succeed." Because viewers assumed that his films operated like a Warhol documentary, Middleton goes on to explain, "it affords him an opportunity to look at a crazy society without judgment, and to evoke a strange theatrical naturalism which is much stranger than fiction."[50]

Morrissey's films were often loosely based on real stories, but he considered himself the director and writer, even though he never wrote an official

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[49] The Official Joe Dallesandro Webpage, "Joe Dalle-Who?," ©1999-2010, Michael Ferguson http://www.joedallesandro.com/Dallewho.htm.

[50] Middleton, Andrew. "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 127.

script. Joe explains the premise of how Morrissey presented a plot. "We would sit down and Paul would give us a paragraph of what the story line was and we'd talk about it a little — talk about going from here to here — and we'd improvise dialogue around that."[51] Although the characters often used personal experiences and played up their real personalities on screen, the movies were not documentary films.

Morrissey set up his characters to embody irresponsibility and reflected the immediacy of the life they lived, fed by sex and drugs with little concern for the future. To Morrissey, these characters defied traditional values. Although Morrissey developed the screenplay, he allowed his actors/actresses to fill in the dialogue with improvisation. His admission to creating characters that display their downfalls is evidenced by his claim to satire. Morrissey has said in an interview, "Satire is the most serious statement you can make."[52] Fed to an audience in 1968 that teetered on doubt and skepticism about the generation, this form of satire offered conservative right- wing politics as a stabilizing alternative.

Morrissey's shift away from the avant-garde was more than just a fashion statement. *Flesh* allowed Morrissey to subliminally express his feelings about the young generation coming of age in the 1960s. Certainly there was talk about change amongst the younger crowd, but the means to do so became very muddy. A great divide within the Democratic Party over the Vietnam war was

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[51] Ferguson, Michael. *Little Joe, Superstar: the Films of Joe Dallesandro.* (Laguna Hills, California: Companion Press, 1998), 78.

[52] Middleton, Andrew. (Quoting Warhol 1975) "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 119.

further proof that no real, tangible solution was in sight—so the Democratic Party offered this young and rebellious generation nothing but lost hopes and dreams. Morrissey recounts the liberalism of the young generation bitterly: "Everyone wanted to glorify the Sixties," he says, sneering, "and talk about Ho Chi Min and being against the war, and having sex, and isn't it great? They wanted to make it look like a movement of well-meaning people, when in fact it was just a movement of irresponsible selfish children!"[53] This comment, made years later, illustrates Morrissey's frustration with the generation. If Andy Warhol was the epicenter of 1960s counterculture, then Morrissey foresaw its demise. For Morrissey, Warhol and other avant-garde artists offered no substantive commentary on the events at hand.

Despite their very different perspectives, Morrissey and Warhol had similar backgrounds. In fact, Morrissey is almost as much of a strange, self-defined wonder as Warhol. Although he was never as extravagant, choosing never to place himself in the spotlight, his conflated self-morals make him a unique man who is hard to place. Morrissey grew up in Catholic school and although he initially rejected his religious upbringing, the evidence of its influence can be seen in the morals he interjects in his films. While working at the factory, he strongly resented the rampant drug use and never integrated himself into the lifestyle of the factory. Choosing to keep his distance, instead he took his employment at the factory seriously. He created a mission to record the lifestyle of the factory crew and his chosen superstars, often conflating it with his own imagination and

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[53] Maher, Kevin. "Up Against the Warhol." *The Times London*, July 28, 2005: 2.18, final edition, Lexis-Nexis.

ideas for plot. At some point Morrissey's Catholic faith came to the forefront of his consciousness, and he seems to have become increasingly conservative both socially and politically.

As of the late 1980s, Morrissey still maintained his position of separation from anything other than conservative politics and "he flatly rejects the assertion that he came out of the leftist avant-garde—he claims proudly to be a Victorian Republican."[54] Maurice Yacowar, the author of the only book on Morrissey films, tries to reconcile the relationship between Morrissey's film subjects and his devout Catholicism.

> Morrissey's humanist morality is clear in his respect for his performers and his submission to their intuitions and revelations. Morrissey by reflex embraces the sinner even as he condemns the sin. His obsession is not with the spectacle of squalor but with the pathos of a wasted humanity. If he returns and returns to intense images of the sordid life, it is in the spirit of the Juvenalian satirist, who feels so passionately the horror of his vision that he rages against the folly he surveys. Morrissey is no more hypocritical in his moral focus than Swift was, another intensely moral man given to scabrous representation of the corruptions of his time. The reiterated rigor and consistent morality distinguish Morrissey from Warhol's aesthetic nihilism. Morrissey has remained as committed to traditional narrative as to morality.[55]

Both Morrissey and his biographer go to great lengths to reconcile Morrissey's seemingly conflicted relationship to the factory and his own conservative, religious morals. Otherwise his involvement with the factory and inclusion of queer characters seems to be a contradiction to his religious morals.

Perhaps more than anything else, most of Morrissey's own quotes, provided over years of interviews, help us understand his personal ambitions

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[54] Scott, Jay. "The Wacky, Irreverent Orbit of Paul Morrissey" *The Globe and Mail* (Canada) Nov. 11, 1988. GAM.

[55] Yacowar, Maurice. *The Films of Paul Morrissey.* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Film Classics, 1993).

behind creating films. Morrissey blames liberals for destroying the religious morals in America and associates himself heavily with conservatives. Yacowar quotes him as follows: "Without institutionalized religion as the basis, a society can't exist. All the sensible values of a solid education and a moral foundation have been flushed down the liberal toilet in order to sell sex, drugs, and rock and roll."[56] But Morrissey was keenly aware that most of his audience was liberal. In another interview he explained,

> 'My films show very human characters,'. . . a faint curmudgeon's smile slowly turning the corners of his mouth. 'And liberals tend to go to movies, while conservatives tend to resent anything that rocks the boat.' He paused, now grinning widely. 'Of course, not a good conservative. A good conservative is someone with an open mind.'[57]

However, even Morrissey seems to confuse how much truth was represented in his films. Morrissey has claimed of his own films, "'they all find comedy in people trying to live their lives without any rules," he said. "'They are a record of the period, but without any overt messages.'"[58] What he fails to acknowledge is that his films were based on figments of his own imagination and resulted from his own contempt for the declining morals he characterized with counterculture. Adding a fictional narrative was not the same thing as what Warhol captured in his stationary camera. Morrissey ignores the judgment implied to the viewer in his films, going on to explain,

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[56] Morris, Gary. "Slapstick Realist: The Cinema of Paul Morrissey" *Bright Lights Film Journal* Issue 17, September 1996.

[57] Bahr, David. "Conservative Bard of the Demimonde" *The New York Times.* Feb. 27, 2000. Sec. 2, Column 1, pg. 21.

[58] Ibid.

> You don't put your personal viewpoints in a good movie," he said. "A movie should only be concerned with characters, not some big moral, although it's always underneath. I just thought the idea of people doing whatever they want was a great subject for films. The characters may be losers, but they're all kind of likable . . . As to why their lives are so messed up, well, that's for the audience to figure out.[59]

One might assume Morrissey realized that the way the characters were presented would lead the audience to make judgments about them. Presenting films as if they were documentaries, Morrissey inflicted judgment on the viewer that would apply to the counterculture at large.

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[59] Ibid.

Warhol & Morrissey

One of the most important connections between Morrissey and Warhol was their common interest in the power of film. They both grew up watching Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s, with female stars like Mae West and Shirley Temple.[60] Both men cite Hollywood movies and the divas that starred in them as a major influence on their films. Warhol and Morrissey mimic the star system and worship of actors/actresses developed by Hollywood in the factory's 'Superstars,' whom they discovered, created, and exploited.[61] Like Morrissey and Warhol, homosexual boys have often been attracted to the star role in early Hollywood films. Historian Daniel Harris explains a common connection between closeted homosexuals and early Hollywood film; "For me and countless other gay men growing up in small-town America, film provided a vehicle for expressing alienation from our surroundings and linking up with the utopic homosexual community of our dreams, a sophisticated and 'artistic' demimonde."[62]

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[60] Middleton, Andrew. "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989).
Stimson, Blake. "Andy Warhol's Red Beard" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Sep., 2001), 527-547.

[61] Warhol 'Superstars' was a term describing the clique of personalities associated with him through his films and art and embodied his quote, "in the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes."

[62] Harris, Daniel. *The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 10. He points to cinema as an escapist outlet for gays or others who were not accepted into the neighborhood. Entering an alternate reality, they imagined belonging with people like themselves. He goes on to explain, "Homosexuals' involvement with Hollywood movies was not only more intense but fundamentally different from that of the rest of the American public. For us, film served a deep psychological and political function. At the very heart of gay diva worship, is not the diva herself but the almost universal homosexual experience of ostracism and insecurity, which ultimately led to what might be called the aestheticism of maladjustment, the gay man's exploitation of cinematic visions of Hollywood grandeur to elevate himself above his agnostic surroundings and simultaneously express memberships in a secret society of upper-class aesthetes."[16]

Warhol and Morrissey learned from early Hollywood, seeing film as the perfect medium for creating stardom and mirroring their own fantasies and desires. In fact, Morrissey gave all the credit of his films to the superstars that he mediated through the camera lenses. For him, the actors and actresses that were cast became the film. Early Hollywood stars and their circle of fandom set up this phenomenon for both Morrissey and Warhol. In an interview by Howton on "Filming Trash," Morrissey seems to have predicted his own anti-fame saying,

> A couple of hundred years from now if you look back on the 20th century you will remember the movie stars. They are the people who truly dominate. Not Picasso with his dinky wall decorations, which have no relation to people. People aren't genuinely interested in what he's done — and he's considered the greatest artist of the 20th century. People are interested in film and the performers . . . I don't think they'll talk much about directors. Or painters. Or writers. But I think Holly Woodland will be remembered.[63]

Both men saw the talent around them as a source for stardom. The factory offered a perfect palate, as it was full of eccentric characters with time to spare and an eagerness to be in the spotlight.

Although they played with the same pieces, Morrissey and Warhol approached the game in different ways. Warhol was a recording device, seeking to capture beauty as it existed in the people and the world around him. His films were distinctly avant-garde, utilizing a deadpan filmmaking aesthetic and long rolling takes, forcing the viewer into a self-reflexive state, where personal interpretations were allowed. The titles of his films are descriptive labels of their focus, for example *Eat*, *Sleep*, or *Blowjob*. Viewers' visual fixation on the object is not aided with a script; therefore they are forced into a mode of self-reflexivity.

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[63] Yacowar, Maurice. *The Films of Paul Morrissey*. (Cambridge Film classics. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

His film *Empire* runs for five hours with the camera fixed on the Empire State Building. It would be easy to imagine how such a film would appeal only to a select group of people and have a hard time drawing a crowd. Warhol's refusal to explain his films through his lack of substantive commentary, as evidenced by his many interviews, forced the art to speak for itself in the viewer's mind. This forced self-reflexivity is a characteristic of the avant-garde.

On the other hand, Morrissey disregarded the avant-garde movement, stating that he found "those films to be the dreariest, most clichéd things ever made."[64] Instead, he projected commercial filmmaking techniques onto Warhol's unconventional platform. He describes most bluntly, "'We can't let the camera roll for 30 minutes any more - it's a waste of film!' and pointed to a future where this underground form would adopt the conventions of mainstream cinema, creating a kind of Warhollywood."[65] By writing a loose screenplay for the films and directing the actors and actresses with dialogue direction, he imposed a plot. He reinstituted a narrative and provided these eccentric characters with a script, making them into actors and actresses rather than people portraying themselves. Warhol and Morrissey used their influence from Hollywood cinema to create their own stars. A major difference, however between Morrissey and Warhol, rested in the role the actors played for Morrissey. By giving them direction, Morrissey made sure they no longer acted out their own characters but rather those from Morrissey's imagination. This was a stark difference from Warhol, a silent director

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[64] Middleton, Andrew. "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 65.

[65] Gilbey, Ryan. "So What Exactly Did Andy Do?" *The Independent (London)* Set. 12, 1996, Film, 6.

who allowed his actors to create himself or herself. These sometimes-unlikely stars had no formal acting training, but Morrissey was able to detect something in them that he felt would transfer well onto film. He cast them as types and made them into characters that represented countercultural youth.

Throughout most of the films Morrissey directed, Joe Dallesandro stood as the protagonist. Just as Edie Sedgwick had served as Warhol's foil, Joe was Morrissey's favorite star. Joe was a young seventeen years old when he wandered into the factory by chance with his brother, Warhol's chauffeur. Morrissey used Joe's good looks and ease with the camera turning him into one of the most famous Warhol superstars overnight. But Morrissey's relationship with Joe off-screen was very different from that of Warhol and Sedgwick. Morrissey took Joe under his wing, helping him with anger management and his alcoholism. In return, Joe faithfully played leading roles, allowing his characterization on film to mature with him.

While Morrissey and Warhol had different artistic styles, their drive for money was the same. They both possessed the desire to commercialize and commodify art. Warhol started to look outside of the gallery walls to quench his thirst for fame. He knew that once he created himself as a commodity, everything he attached his name to would increase in overall value. Although Warhol often preferred to mask his motives, he is quoted saying, "I started as a commercial artist and I want to finish as a business artist. After I did the thing called 'art' I went into business art . . . making money is art and working is art and good

business is the best art."[66] Despite the shifting ideology of the Warhol films, their success kept Warhol funding them.

[66] Middleton, Andrew. (Quoting Warhol 1975) "The films of Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey." (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 67.

Conclusion

After Morrissey gained control over the Warhol films, they became commercial narratives that allowed the audience a judgment of what they perceived as Joe's real life. Morrissey's Victorian conservative morals did not allow him to omit his own judgments from seeping into his films, and they were often contrived as nostalgic comparisons to an earlier time of life. Morrissey's association with conservatism is not the same as the conservative shift the Republican Party took during the 1970s focusing on privatized big business models. Rather, Morrissey's conservatism focused on upholding moral codes.

Morrissey's judgment of the counterculture and declining morals of American youth was an alarm set off in an attempt to advocate change. His nostalgia for the simplicity and beauty of the classical past reflects his desire to return to a traditional past. His narrative format and commercial approach was an attempt to reach a broader audience. His off-screen parental role over Joe reflected a genuine desire to help him escape the trap of alcoholism and life on the street. Morrissey's critical attitude captured through the lens of the camera was genuine concern for a decade of young Americans experimenting with change.

It was Morrissey's conservative tone that would influence the art Warhol produced in the 1970s, shifting from individual expression to an entertainment business. The commercial success of *Flesh* confirmed Morrissey's role in Warhol's enterprise, and his involvement further pushed Warhol's name into a branded identity, turning his art into a business. Under Morrissey's direction,

Warhol would take on several business endeavors associating his name with the rock band Velvet Underground, *Interview Magazine*, a stream of big-budget commercial films, and a television show. Far from his early drawings, Warhol exceeded the romantic notion of individual artistic genius as he corporatized his name and pumped out art for the masses.

Because Warhol had been shaken by his near death experience, he changed the way the factory operated. The art he created in the '70s included society portraits, editing *Interview* magazine and also focusing on celebrities and hosting a television show. Moving higher in the ranks of society, Warhol left the counterculture behind. The voting citizens of America had done the same, electing a Republican as President and shifting their interest from social freedom to economic freedom. As the turmoil of the '60s started to settle down, the Republican Party got stronger and conservatives who once seemed too extreme on the far right of the conservative spectrum gained control. Economic freedom seemed easier to achieve than the fight for social freedom had been.

Warhol identified with the counterculture early in his career. For example, he took the rebellion that the hippies started in San Francisco with marijuana and recreated it with amphetamines in New York. Like the West Coast model, Warhol rejected societal norms by challenging notions of art and culture. He was the first prominent American artist to freely express his *swish* femininity, which highlighted

his homosexuality.[67] He transformed himself into a character and as his popularity grew, so did his vision. His legend is iconically American, starting as a poor immigrant son who reinvented himself to become as he self prophesized, as "famous as the Queen of England."[68] As his commissions grew, Warhol added a studio assistant and then founded the original *factory*, his studio space from 1962-1968 located on the fifth floor of East 47th street in midtown Manhattan.[69] Although the factory was located in a loft space, its title seemed to institute the function in creating a product. Although the factory became a hip place for many to hang out, it continued to operate like a factory from the silkscreen assembly line to the screen test films that were constantly rolling. Warhol designed his own stylish version of production with young, beautiful people who hung around the shinny, silver plastered walls that decorated the factory.

Warhol's entrepreneurial spirit and love for capitalism reflected a general attitude that was sweeping America in the 1960s and would come to be in conflict with the youth rebellion. As the civil rights brought the concept of freedom to the forefront of discussion, the emphasis on freedom moved from social topics to economic principles. America was quickly becoming a consuming nation;

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[67] Swish refers to outward feminine behavior. Warhol always thought Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, two closeted homosexual American painters, didn't like him because he was "too swish." They were hanging out with ultra-macho Abstract Expressionist artists, like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, who might not have accepted them if they were openly gay. In his early career, Warhol was drawing controversial homoerotic scenes such as boys kissing although he could not secure an exhibition for this type of work and attributed it to his lack of acceptance by abstract expressionist artists.

[68] Quoted by Frederick Eberstadt, who recalls, "Here was this weird little faggot with his impossible wig...telling me that he wanted to be as famous as the Queen of England!" from Bockris, Victor. *Warhol.* (London: Muller, 1989).

[69] Bockris, Victor. *Warhol.* (London: Muller, 1989).

consequently the definition of freedom should be extended to ideas of economic freedom. This met with an emerging economic theory led by Milton Friedman that was quickly gaining popularity in America. Neo-liberals were interested in human rights with a conservative attitude towards economic policy. The term *liberal* had little to do with its earlier association with the democratic left. Friedman advocated for appropriating the term *liberal* because it insinuated, "favoring major changes in social institutions," returning to what he considered the origins of the late-18th and early-19th-century term. His manifesto continues, "We do not wish to conserve the state interventions that have interfered so greatly with our freedom."[70] With the same vein of thought as the basis of 1960s counterculture, both neo-liberals and the counterculture were advocating for freedom and wanted to loosen restrictions on personal liberty.

Warhol embraced the notions of both social and economic freedom. For Warhol the products of mass-production were a symbol of the freedom to choose what to consume and it applied to all Americans. He has said,

> What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.[71]

This fascination with standardized products and the freedom to consume democratic products is evident in his earliest art. But Warhol realized that he

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[70] Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and Freedom.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 6.

[71] Warhol, Andy. The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1975).

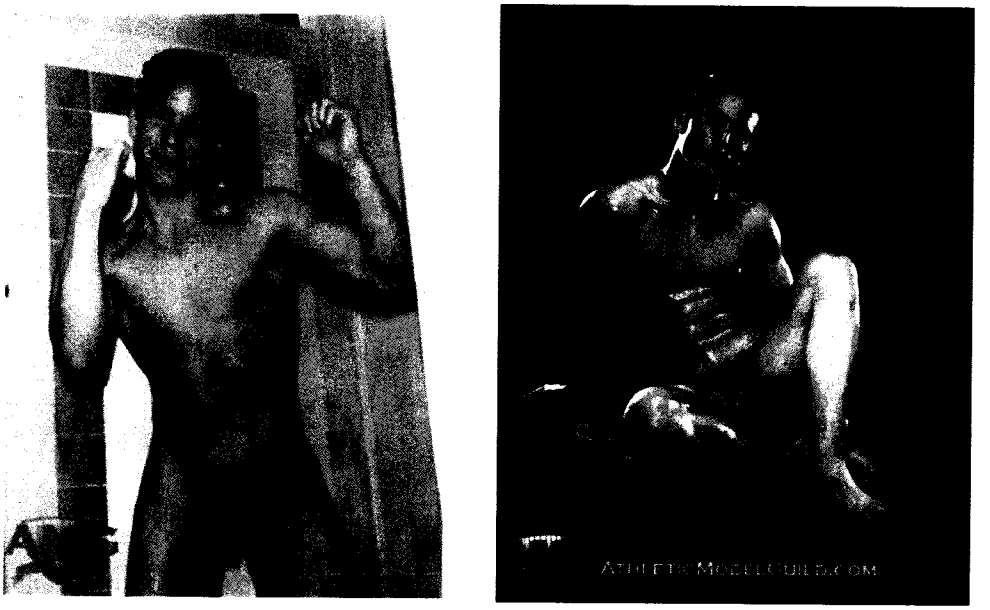
could also mass-produce artistic products. The larger his label, the more value the market would place on his art quickly escalating his overall fame. He began to outsource labor, granting Morrissey full control over Warhol filmmaking. As his output moved from paintings to personalities, Warhol continued to print his label on things from the superstars he captured on film to the rock band he managed.

Morrissey never seemed to fit into Warhol's value system. This has been noted by factory members on his personality as well as the seemingly contradictory morals he maintained while working at the factory simultaneously subsumed by the deviant acts around him. Despite his cynicism, he was a part of the factory and was captivated by the people there, like Warhol capturing them on film. The criticism of the counterculture that he instituted with his narrative plot was his attempt at sounding an alarm to the decreasing morals of Americans. What he did not anticipate was the changing tone of the Republican Party. Once they managed to gain control in 1968, the party moved further to the right, using Morrissey's own moral code as a façade for upholding traditional values. But as Warhol used his countercultural façade to look cool and gain popularity, he and the Republican Party took on a momentum of their own. By 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected and the culmination of the far right's desire for power had been reached. He represented the far right's most conservative theories, ones which the Republican Party had once thought could not win the majority vote in America. For Reagan individual power meant limiting the power of the state and economic freedom above all. He lowered taxes and reduced the power of the government, giving businesses the opportunity to pick up the slack.

His presidency marked the major shift in power from the government to private business that was continued by the Bush and Clinton administrations.

Warhol embraced the changes of the '60s as well as the '70s allowing them to alter his work. His art became a private corporation feeding off the wealthiest class. In this respect, Warhol anticipated one key component to the new conservatism—the economic one. In contrast, Morrissey's film reflected a deeply personal battle to defeat the loose morals of the counterculture and restore conservative values. Thus, Morrissey anticipated the other component—the moral one. His voice, as presented in *Flesh,* stands as a harbinger of the moral conflicts the American people would endure for years to come.

Figures 1
Andy Warhol sketches after Wilhelm von Gloeden
© The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
1928



Figures 2
Athletic Model Guild photographs of Joe Dallesandro
© Bob Mizer
ca. 1965

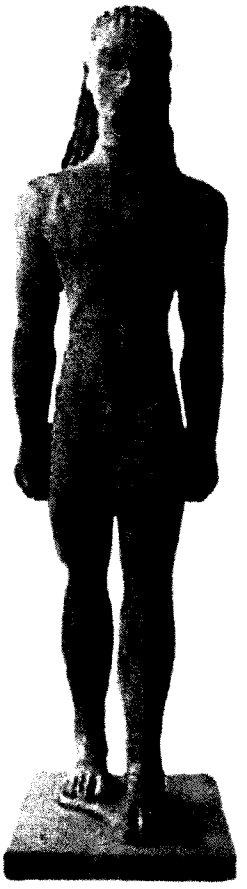


Figure 3
Early Kouros, known as *New York Kouros* c. 600-590 BCE

Figure 4
Peoplos Kore c. 530-520 BC

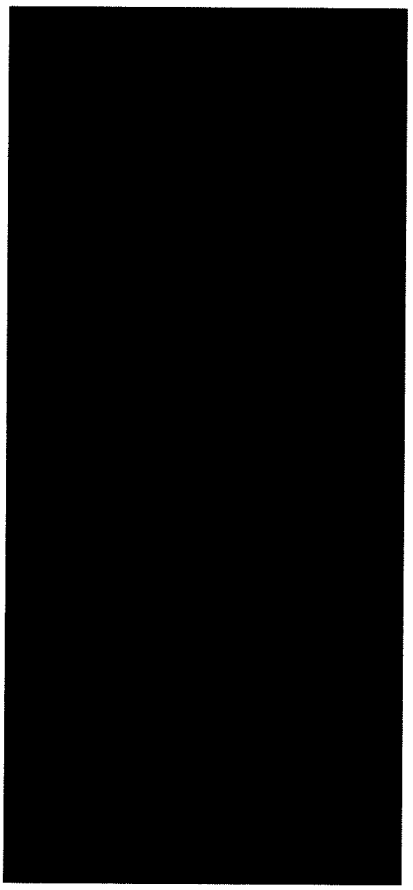
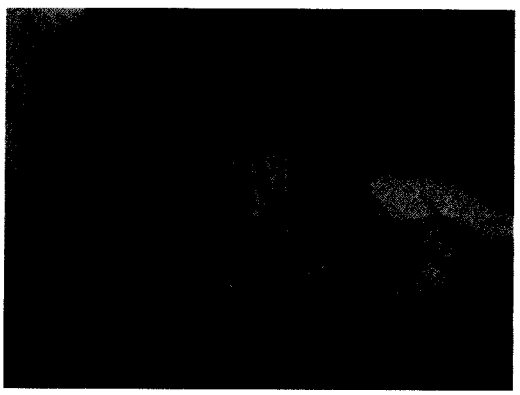
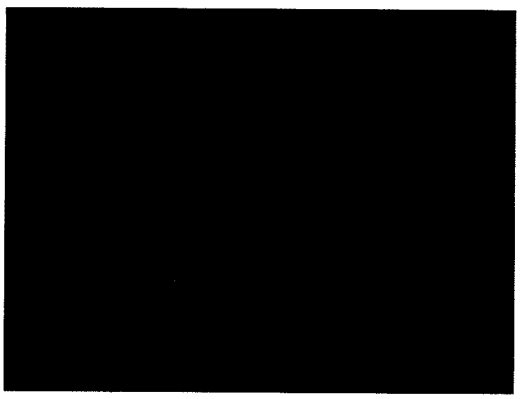


Figure 5
Screen shot of Joe Dallesandro from *Flesh*





Figures 6 & 7, Screen shots from *Flesh*

Figure 8
Hermes Feeding the Infant Dionysus
Praxitieles c. 330 BCE

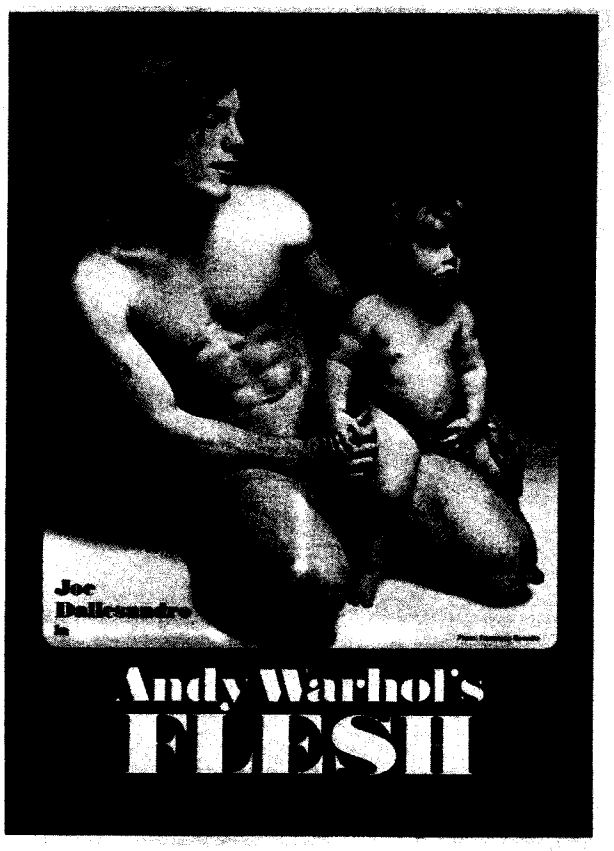
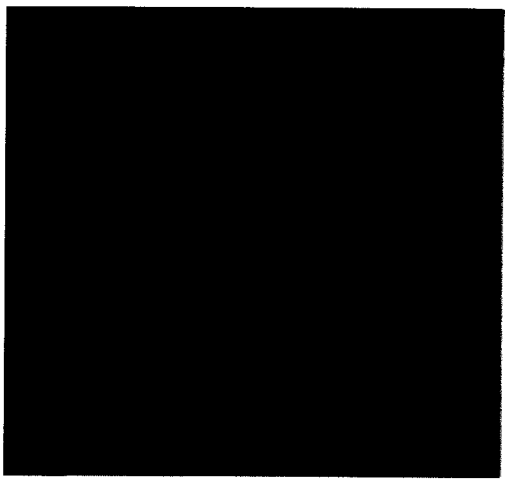
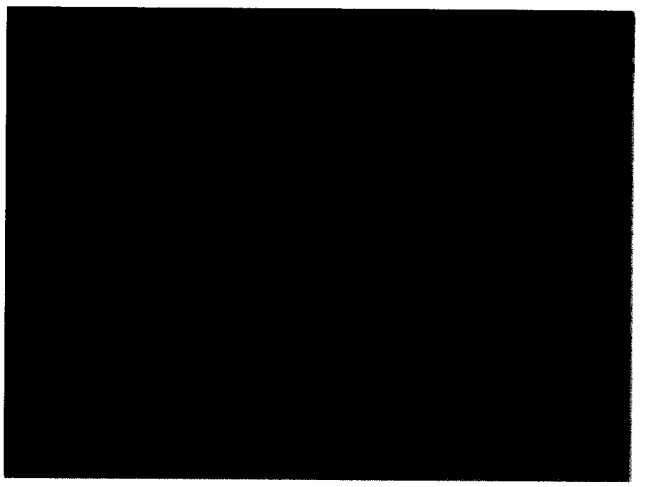


Figure 9
Flesh promotional movie poster, c. 1968





Figures 10 & 11
Screen shots from *Flesh*

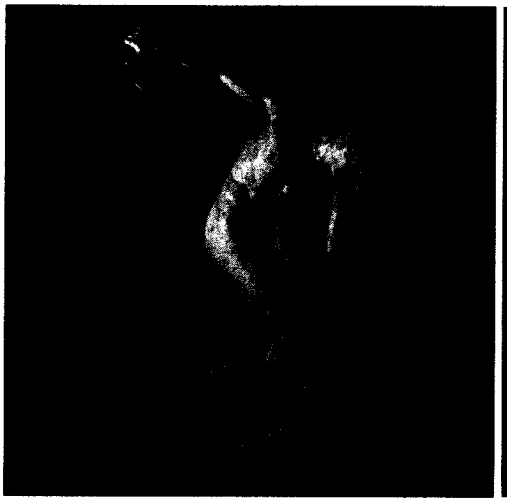


Figure 12
The Discobolos
British Museum Copy
c. 460 - 450 BCE

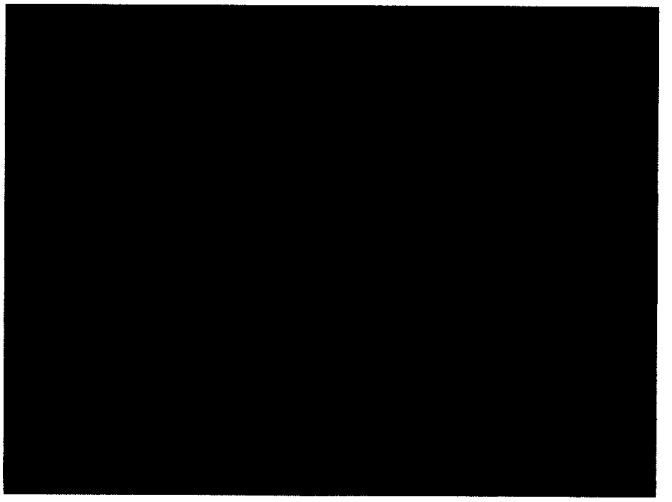


Figure 13
Screen shot from *Flesh*

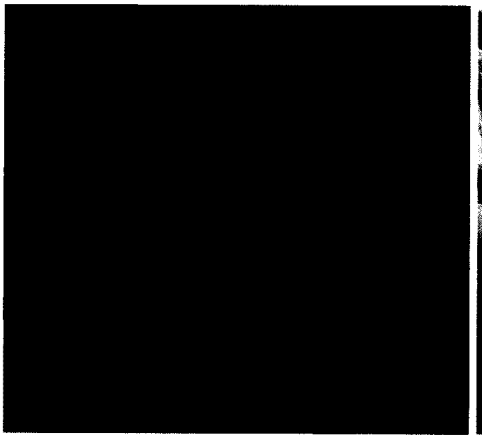


Figure 14
Screen shot from *Flesh*

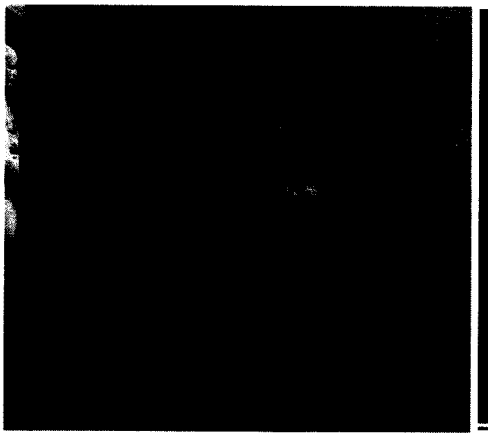


Figure 15
Detail of *Anacreon Statue*
Roman copy of Greek Bronze
ca. 440 B.C.

Figure 16
Vase painting of athlete wearing the *kynodesme*
Attributed to the Triptolemos painter
c.480 BCE

Figures 17
Detail and Triptych
Andy Warhol's Factory Gang
Richard Avedon
1969

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